

LIFE IS A PRIVILEGE

Life is a privilege. Its youthful days
Shine with the radiance of continuous Mays.
To live, to breathe, to wonder and desire,
To feed with dreams the heart's perpetual fire;
To thrill with virtuous passions and to glow
With great ambitions--in one hour to know
The depths and heights of feeling--God! in truth
How beautiful, how beautiful is youth!

Life is a privilege. Like some rare rose
The mysteries of the human mind uncloze.
What marvels lie in earth and air and sea,
What stores of knowledge wait our opening key,
What sunny roads of happiness lead out
Beyond the realms of indolence and doubt,
And what large pleasures smile upon and bless
The busy avenues of usefulness.

Life is a privilege. Though noontide fades
And shadows fall along the winding glades;
Though joy-blooms wither in the autumn air,
Yet the sweet scent of sympathy is there.
Pale sorrow leads us closer to our kind,
And in the serious hours of life we find
Depths in the soul of men which lend new worth
And majesty to this brief span of earth.

Life is a privilege. If some sad fate
Sends us alone to seek the exit gate;
If men forsake us as the shadows fall,
Still does the supreme privilege of all
Come in that reaching upward of the soul
To find the welcoming presence at the goal,
And in the knowledge that our feet have trod
Paths that lead from and must lead back to God.

Poems of Progress and New Thought Pastels by Ella Wheeler Wilcox.
London: Gay & Hancock, 1911.